

VZCZCXRO4022
RR RUEHAG RUEHAST RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHDF RUEHIK RUEHLH RUEHLN RUEHLZ
RUEHPW RUEHROV RUEHVK RUEHYG
DE RUEHAH #0559 1231254
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 021254Z MAY 08
FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0731
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2483
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1537
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1404
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 3719
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 1973
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

UNCLAS ASHGABAT 000559

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR SCA/CEN, DRL, EEB

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [SCUL](#) [SOCI](#) [KIRF](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: REGISTRATION WOES FOR BAPTIST CHURCH IN
DASHOGUZ

11. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

12. (SBU) Turkmen Baptist Church of Dashoguz pastor Begjan Shirmedov says it is no easier trying to register his church under President Berdimuhamedov than former President Niyazov. More than two years ago, Shirmedov submitted paperwork to the Ministry of Justice for official registration and recognition of his church. When asked what is taking so long, Shirmedov pessimistically responded, "The government thinks Christian leaders can be dangerous."

13. (SBU) While the Ministry continues to review his documents, Shirmedov holds regular church meetings and bible study groups. Shirmedov emphasized that his meetings are non-political with no discussion about political or human rights. Shirmedov believes that the government is aware of his "secret" meetings since they advised him not to allow children under 18 to attend. The Baptist Church has 53 members.

14. (SBU) COMMENT: While Shirmedov has had no progress in getting his congregation registered, they are allowed to worship in peace. Local officials in his area are probably content to ignore the unregistered group. END COMMENT.

CURRAN